
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 October 2020

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01/12/2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/D/20/3253266

2 Earles Meadow, Horsham, RH12 4HP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr D Curran against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/19/2340, dated 19 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 19 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as '*Remove existing hedge and replace with fence*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application was retrospective and at the time of my visit I saw that the development had already taken place.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the fence upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. No 2 Earles Meadow is a detached dwelling set within a residential estate dating from around the 1990s. Whether the appeal property is a gateway dwelling or not is moot. The plot's outside boundary however is visually prominent, being seen head-on in the narrow and winding approach of the road into the wider estate at this point. The buildings that are seen in this approach have a generally verdant setting, established by the open plan and vegetated frontage to No 1 Earles Meadow, and the natural landscape opposite. Photographs of the appeal property taken before the fence was erected show how the original hedgerow to the side of the dwelling and positioned at the back edge of the footpath was complementary.
5. As one progresses deeper into the estate, the urban form of the surroundings naturally becomes more dominant. However, there is a deliberate mix of boundary treatments along the back edges of the pavements including

hedgerows, fencing and walls. These all gel together to create a coherent blend that is predominantly soft and pleasing to the eye. Where solid walls and fence panels do exist in visually more prominent positions, they are generally part of a consistent design approach for the estate as a whole and are well articulated by use of mixed materials but chosen from a standard palette range giving visual relief and interest but in a uniform way. By contrast, the fencing at No 2 stands out in isolation. Not only is it highly visible in the street scene but the materials appear strident and out of character. The use of concrete posts and gravel boards, and horizontally arranged close boarded fence panels, are atypical and out of keeping with the established and considered pattern of development in the area.

6. My attention has been drawn to some specific examples of other boundaries in the immediate area. The example at No 81 Earles Meadow demonstrates to me how the use of mixed boundary treatments can blend with each other to appear comfortable in their setting. In my view the treatment of the side boundary to No 81 does not appear intrusive. The siting and visual prominence of the example at Nos 73 and 75 bears little similarity to the circumstances at No 2. The wall at No 61 is well articulated with appropriate relief, detailing, and choice of materials. I saw nothing during my visit that compared with the boundary erected at the appeal property.
7. I have noted the appellant's reasons for replacing the hedgerow, but this does not justify the visual harm that I have identified through the erection of an unsympathetic and intrusive form of development.

Conclusion

8. For the reasons given, due to its siting and appearance, I find the fence to be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. By so doing it fails to protect the townscape character of the area or provide the design quality that is required by Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015). For the same reasons there is conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework as it relates to achieving well-designed places.
9. Notwithstanding the absence of any objection from the North Horsham Parish Council, the Local Highway Authority, the stated absence of any objection from some nearby occupiers, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR